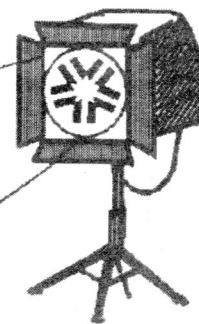


DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OFFICE ON AGING

Spotlight On Aging



VOLUME XX, ISSUE 12

A newsletter for D.C. Seniors

December 2005

Celebrating Older Washingtonians and 30 years of the Office on Aging

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



By E. Veronica Pace

Seasons Greetings. 'Tis the season to be merry, to be thankful, and to be ready for any and all emergencies, potential and actual. Emergency preparedness for personal and public safety is a year-round undertaking. Important messages are included in this issue of "Spotlight."

As we close the door on one year and usher in a new one, we give thanks for the volunteers, caregivers, Commissioners, advocates, families, friends and workers, who serve, feed, clean and protect us day in and day out.

December is a month for honoring the traditions of our elders and ancestors and for cherishing the memories and legacies of souls at rest: **Karyn Barquin, James Booze, Eula Johnson, Rosa Parks, C. Delores Tucker and Jane Vines.** May we continue to decorate our tree of life with gratitude, service and safety.



Emergency Energy Assistance Available to Eligible Low-Income D.C. Residents

Emergency financial help is now available to low-income D.C. residents if either their PEPCO or Washington Gas service has been disconnected or they are out of heating oil.

Low-income District residents may come to the D.C. Energy Office (DCEO) to apply for this emergency assistance.

The financial assistance for qualified applicants may include an ongoing benefit and, depending upon the amount you owe, up to \$520 of emergency assistance. The \$520 is a 30 percent increase over last year's \$400 emergency assistance benefit. In fact, all Low-Income Heating Assistance Program (LIHEAP) benefits have been increased by 30 percent in anticipation of this year's spike in energy costs.

The opportunity to come in to the DCEO without an appointment is only available to residents whose service has already been disconnected or are out of heating oil. All

other applicants must call the D.C. Energy Office hotline at 202-673-6750 to schedule an appointment.

All applicants must bring proof of household income, their most recent utility bills, rent receipts/lease agreement, and official documentation from the utility company that the service has been disconnected.

DCEO requires that the applicant first attend a 30-minute energy efficiency workshop that demonstrates energy-saving measures like caulking, door and window weather-stripping, plastic storm window application, as well as various other low cost/no cost energy-saving tips.

Emergency applicants should come to the D.C. Energy Office, located at 2000 14th Street, N.W., 2nd floor, between 8:15 a.m. and 4:45 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information, call the DC Energy Hotline at 202-673-6750.

EMPLOYERS WANTED!

Employers are needed to hire District residents 55 and older to fulfill their full time and part time employment needs. Employers gain mature dependable, safety-conscious and hard working employees for a wide range of positions.

The D.C. Office on Aging Older Workers Employment and Training Program (OWETP) provides employment and training opportunities for District of Columbia residents 55 years of age and older. The program can match your labor needs with qualified job seekers. This service is provided free of charge.

For more information contact:

D.C. Office on Aging, Older Worker Employment and Training Program
441 Fourth Street, NW, Suite 950, Washington, D.C. 20001 • 202-724-3662



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

ANTHONY A. WILLIAMS, MAYOR

D.C. OFFICE ON AGING NEWSLETTER

Senior Preparedness

A Message from

Barbara Childs Pair, Director
D.C. Emergency Management Agency

All of us need to take steps to ensure that we are prepared for emergencies and disasters of all types. This is especially important for older people who may live alone or who may need special assistance in the event of an emergency.

Here are some things that you can do be sure that you are prepared for emergencies.

Make a plan. Be sure you and your family have written personal and family preparedness plans that include emergency telephone numbers and medical information, including your doctor's name, telephone number, the names of prescription medicines you may be taking and the prescribed dosage.

Also include contact numbers that you and other family members can call if you are separated during an emergency, and the location of a meeting place where family members would reunite if separated.

It's also a good idea to have the telephone number of a neighbor or someone who lives close by so that you can contact them in the event that you need help during an emergency. You should also be sure that several people have your number and that they agree to call and check on you during emergencies.

Be prepared. Make an emergency "go kit" con-

taining items that will sustain you for at least three days, including one gallon of water per day, a supply of non-perishable food, a first aid kit, a flashlight and a battery-powered radio. You should also have a whistle in case you need to let people know that you are stranded in your home or apartment and are unable to call or shout loudly enough for anyone to hear you.

It is important for you to know and understand emergency terms such as *shelter-in-place* and to know the difference between a *watch* and a *warning*.

Shelter-in-place involves simply staying in your house or inside any other location where you might be, in order to avoid harm. In the event of an emergency such as the release of a hazardous material, it is not always recommended to immediately evacuate, as leaving your house might expose you to harmful agents that have been dispersed into the air.

A *Severe Weather Watch* means that severe weather may develop. A *Severe Weather Warning* means a

storm has developed and is on its way. **Take cover immediately!**

Each of us must take responsibility for our own emergency preparedness. Government can't do it alone. An emergency can occur quickly and without warning. Make sure you have the knowledge and resources to sustain yourself during emergencies and disasters of all kinds.



Message from the

FIRE MARSHALL

By Richard Fleming

With the cold weather approaching, it is important to be careful when using a space heater. Space heaters must be kept three feet from anything that can catch fire (curtains, bed linens, clothes, etc.).

If you have to connect your space heater to an electrical cord, please use a heavy duty extension cord. Remember, extension cords are meant for temporary use only.

Do not turn the oven on for extra warmth, because the flame could go out, filling your home with natural gas or carbon monoxide. Never sleep with the oven or space heaters on.

Kerosene heaters are illegal in the District. People have a tendency to abuse them by not using the proper fuel. Sometimes gasoline or another fuel is used in the heater, causing the heater to catch fire. They are also a source of carbon monoxide.

When using your fireplace or wood stove, keep the door and/or fire screen shut to protect your home from sparks. Only burn dry, seasoned wood, never rubbish. Garbage and green wood can cause a chimney fire. Remember to have your chimney inspected and serviced before each heating season.

Change the batteries in your smoke alarms, too.

Always have a plan to escape from your home in case of fire. Keep your eyeglasses on the night stand along with a whistle to let your family know that they need to evacuate, and a flashlight to help you see in the darkness. Sleep with your door closed, as this helps to keep fire and smoke on the other side.

—*Have a safe winter!*

Be Prepared for Winter Emergencies

Preparing for emergencies during the cold weather season is very important to older persons. As you get older, your body becomes less able to respond to long exposure to the cold.

Seniors should be mindful that hypothermia can be fatal. Hypothermia is a condition of below normal body temperature - typically 95 degrees Fahrenheit or under. Hypothermia may occur in anyone who is exposed to severe cold without enough protection. Symptoms include a low temperature, sluggishness, slurred speech, slow breathing and confusion.

To avoid becoming a victim of hypothermia, dress warmly even when indoors, eat enough food, and stay

as active as possible. Because hypothermia may start while you are sleeping, keep warm in bed by wearing enough clothing and using blankets. Also, neighbors and friends should check on each other and exchange emergency information, which includes family members to contact, information about your primary doctor, and other important information.

This winter, think smart and prepare yourself for cold weather, icy conditions, and circumstances where going out might not be possible. Start storing canned foods and non-perishable items, as well as bottled water and other items to sustain you until you can get out again. Make sure you include a non-electric

can opener and items that you can eat without warming in case of power loss.

Also during the cold season, don't wait to the last minute to refill prescriptions - fill them a week in advance just in case weather and icy conditions make it unsafe to venture out.

During the snow season, keep your shovel on a porch or inside so that it is easy to get to and you won't have to go down unshoveled steps or an unshoveled walkway to get to the shed or other place where shovels are often stored.

During extreme cold, always keep your heat on so that pipes don't freeze up. A good temperature to keep your heat set on is 65 degrees or higher.

These protective measures will help you endure the unbearable weather and keep you safe.

In case of a power outage, keep a battery-operated lamp or flashlight in a safe place. Candles can be dangerous, but if you must use them, remember to keep them secure and away from flammable objects. Do not leave burning candles unattended.

Remember to store additional, fresh batteries in case power is not restored right away. Check to see if your neighbors are also experiencing a power outage. If you are the only one, call PEPCO (see number below).

If a power outage occurs in your area, use a battery-powered radio to stay informed.

In the District of Columbia, the following stations are designated as Emergency Alerting System (EAS) radio stations: WTOP 1500 AM, WMAL 630 AM, WRC 570 AM and WKYS 93.9 FM.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

D.C. OFFICE ON AGING **202-724-5626**

The Information and Assistance Office can link you with needed services. Open Monday through Friday, 8:15 a. m. to 4: 45 p.m.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS ENERGY OFFICE HOTLINE **202-673-6750**

Available Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for information and assistance with utilities.

D. C. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY **202-727-6161**

Provides information about shelters, blankets, heaters, oil and a health clinic nearest you. Open 24 hours, 7 days a week.

HYPOTHERMIA HOTLINE **1-800-535-7252 or 202-399-7093**

Provides information on emergency transportation, shelters and cold weather information. Open 24 hours, 7 days a week.

POTOMAC ELECTRIC POWER COMPANY (PEPCO) **202-833-7500**

WASHINGTON GAS **703-750-1000**

Season's Greetings!

A District senior reviews budget priorities at Citizens Summit IV.

Seniors were involved in active community engagement at Citizens Summit IV.

D.C. Commission on Aging member Elfrida Foy talks about ideas at Citizens Summit IV.

Representatives of the Metropolitan Police Department, including Chief Charles Ramsey, prepared Thanksgiving Dinner for the seniors at the Congress Heights Senior Wellness Center.



D.C. OFFICE ON AGING NEWSLETTER

Community Calendar

December events

6th through 21st

In a program called "12 Days of Christmas Blues Busters," UPO/Project KEEN participants will visit and telephone the homebound, the sick and those in nursing homes to spread joy and to lend an ear to help beat the holiday blues. For more information on how to participate, contact Robinette Livingston at 202-684-4431.

8th • 2 p.m.

Attend a workshop at IONA titled "Family and Caregiver Conversations." The workshop focuses on memory loss and aging; early warning signs of Alzheimer's disease, diagnosis and treatment options; caregiver challenges; and resources for families. The seminar will be led by nurse practitioner Barbara Resnick and is sponsored in part by the National Council on the Aging. Registration is required. IONA is located at 4125 Albemarle St., N.W. To register or receive additional information, call 202-966-1055.

7th & 21st • 12:30 to 2 p.m.

Join IONA's "Caregivers Alzheimer's Association Support Group" for both caregivers and older adults. IONA is located at 4125 Albemarle St., N.W. For additional information or to register, call 202-895-9448.

13th & 27th • 12:30 to 2 p.m.

Join IONA's "Caregivers of Individuals with Dementia" support group for both caregivers and older adults. IONA is located at 4125 Albemarle St., N.W. For additional information or to register, call 202-895-9448.

15th • 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Join IONA's "Low-Vision Support Group" for both caregivers and older adults from 12:30 to 2 p.m. IONA is located at 4125 Albemarle St., N.W. For additional information or to register, call 202-895-9448.

15th • 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Come to the 8th annual Senior Holiday Celebration at the D.C. Armory. Find out how Medicare Part D can benefit you, gather information on sen-

ior services, and enjoy lunch, music and dancing. For tickets, call 202-724-5626.

22 • noon

Join the Upper Room Baptist Church senior citizens and Allen House residents for their Christmas celebration, December birthdays, and the 14th anniversary of the opening of Allen House. The event will take place at the Navy Yard, Building 211, 9th and M Streets, S.E. A bus will leave at 11 a.m. from the front of the Allen House, 3760 Minnesota Ave., N.E. The donation for the event is \$20. Call 202-396-7351 for reservations. The last day to register is Dec. 16.

Ongoing

Fridays

Join IONA's "Parkinson's Support Group" for both caregivers and older adults every Friday from 11 a.m. to noon. IONA is located at 4125 Albemarle St., N.W. For additional information or to register, call 202-895-9448.

DON'T PANIC!

Medicare Drug Coverage Enrollment Just Beginning

Beneficiaries Have Six Months to Consider Options and Make Decisions

Although enrollment for the new Medicare prescription drug coverage began on November 15, DON'T PANIC if you have not yet enrolled! Medicare beneficiaries have until May 15, 2006 to enroll in a plan.

What's more, personalized help is available if you need assistance in deciding what is right for you.

Remember, beginning January 1, 2006, ALL people with Medicare are eligible for prescription drug coverage, regardless of income. If you sign up by December 31, 2005, your coverage will start January 1, 2006. If you sign up after December 31, 2005, your coverage will start the month after you sign up.

And for those with limited income and resources, there is extra help available to help pay for that coverage. Earlier this year, the Social Security Administration mailed applications to beneficiaries who might qualify for the Low Income Subsidy. If you received one and didn't fill it out, it is NOT too late!

If you misplaced or threw away the application, contact the District of Columbia Income Maintenance Administration at 202-724-5506. That office will provide information and help you apply for whatever assistance for which you may be eligible.

Now is the time to carefully consider your needs, and learn about what is available to meet them. Enrollment for prescription drug coverage

is voluntary, but you must join a plan to get the coverage.

People with Medicare in Washington, D.C. have a range of choices for prescription drug coverage. However, the plans differ in a number of ways, such as which drugs are covered, how much you have to pay, and which pharmacies you can use.

Some plans offer additional coverage for a higher monthly premium. That is why it is important to consider all these variations and to choose a plan that best meets your **SPECIFIC** needs, based on **COVERAGE, COST** and **CONVENIENCE**.

What can you do now to make an informed decision about Medicare prescription drug coverage? Gather information, and prepare to make a decision.

☛ Know and write down what coverage you have now — do you have traditional Medicare, or a Medicare Advantage plan? Do you currently get prescription drug coverage through a Medigap policy, or a former employer or union, or another source?

☛ Make a list of the medicines you take, including the dose and frequency for each medicine.

☛ Write down where and/or how you currently get your medicines. Is it from a local pharmacy? Mail order?

☛ Know what you can afford. Consider how much you are spending now, and how much you are willing to spend — and able to save — with prescription drug coverage.

With that information in hand, you can zero in on a plan that works for you. Personalized help is available through the following sources:

☛ Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227), where you can speak with a customer service representative.

☛ Go to www.medicare.gov, where you (or someone you know and trust) can access a Plan Finder, which will help you identify and compare plans that meet your needs.

☛ You can call the Health Insurance Counseling Project (in Washington, D.C.) for personal counseling at 202-739-0668.

☛ The District of Columbia Income Maintenance Administration provides information on the extra help available to those with limited income and resources at 202-724-5506.

☛ Enrollment events are being held throughout the community, at senior centers, houses of worship, senior housing complexes and other locations. Check for flyers as well as announcements on radio, television and in newspapers.

SPOTLIGHT ON AGING

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Advertising contained in the Senior Beacon is not endorsed by the D.C. Office on Aging or by the publisher.

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202-724-5622 • www.dcoa.dc.gov

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Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination which is prohibited by the Act. In addition, harassment based on any of the above protected categories is prohibited by the Act. Discrimination in violation of the Act will not be tolerated. Violators will be subjected to disciplinary action.

The Office on Aging is in partnership with the District of Columbia Recycling Program.